

32nd Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

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Strengthening local government through direct applicability of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in domestic legal systems

Strasbourg, 29 March 2017 – In a debate held during the 32nd session, on 28 March 2017, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe spoke of the status of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in domestic legal systems. As an international treaty ratified by the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, the Charter has legal force and should be directly applied in domestic legal systems.

Prepared by Stewart Dickson (United Kingdom, ILDG) and Leendert Verbeek (Netherlands, SOC), the report mentions recurring issues identified by the Congress during missions to assess implementation of the Charter between 2010 and 2016 and which are mainly due to the refusal to apply the Charter directly. The issues include inadequate financial resources for local and regional authorities, lack of clarity in the definition, allocation and exercise of local competences and lack of consultation with regard to central government. Specific issues were identified in the electoral sphere, such as the accuracy of voters' lists, the misuse of administrative resources during electoral campaigns, the politicisation of the electoral administration at all levels, and voters' declining trust in electoral processes.

Most of these recurring issues were also highlighted in the comparative analysis on the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Council of Europe member states, presented during the same debate by the co-rapporteurs Karim Van Overmeire (Belgium) and Xavier Cadoret (France, SOC).

In the adopted texts, the Congress calls on national authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure direct applicability of the European Charter of Local Self-Government within their domestic legal systems and to implement the relevant Congress recommendations.

[Video of the debate](#)

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